

### What is an anticoagulant?

If you have some kind of heart or blood vessel disease, or if you have poor blood flow to your brain, your doctor may recommend that you take a blood thinner (an anticoagulant). Blood thinners reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke by lessening the formation of blood clots in your arteries and veins. There are two main types of blood thinners:

**Anticoagulants**, such as heparin or warfarin—also called Coumadin—work on chemical reactions in your body to lengthen the time it takes to form a blood clot.

**Antiplatelet drugs**, such as aspirin, prevent blood cells—called platelets—from clumping together to form a blood clot.

### How is warfarin used?

Warfarin is used to prevent blood clots from forming or growing larger in your blood and blood vessels. It

Source: U.S. National Library of Medicine (Medline)



is prescribed for people with certain types of irregular heartbeat, people with prosthetic (replacement or mechanical) heart valves, and people who have suffered a heart attack. Warfarin is also used to treat or prevent venous thrombosis (swelling and a blood clot in a vein) and pulmonary embolism (a blood clot in the lung). Taken as a tablet by mouth, it works by decreasing the clotting ability of the blood.

### Precautions

Before taking warfarin:

- Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are allergic to warfarin or any other medications.
- Do not take two or more medications that contain warfarin at the same time.

- Tell your doctor and pharmacist what prescription and non-prescription medications you are taking.

### Missed Doses

If you happen to miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember it, if it is the same day that you were to take the dose. Do not take a double dose the next day to make up for a missed one. Talk to your doctor if you miss a dose of warfarin.

### What side effects are there with warfarin?

Warfarin may cause side effects. Tell your doctor if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away:

- Gas
- Change in taste
- Tiredness
- Pale skin
- Loss of hair
- Chills

There are additional symptoms that may be very serious so it is vital that you read the “Important Warnings” section of the leaflet that accompanies your prescription.

Licensed Medicare and Medicaid agency by the State of Texas.

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Call your doctor immediately if you notice a purplish or darkened color to your skin, skin changes, or ulcers. Warfarin may cause other side effects.

In case of overdose, call your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222 or call 9-1-1 if it is an emergency. It is also prudent to carry an identification card or wear a bracelet stating that you take warfarin. Alert all your healthcare providers that you take warfarin.

It is important for you to keep a written list of all of the medicines you are taking and bring this list with you each time you visit a doctor. See the medications sample chart at right.

### Storing your medication

Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and out of the reach of children. Store it at room temperature and away from excess heat and moisture (for example, not in the bathroom), and light. Throw away any medication that is outdated or is no longer needed.

### Keep Track of Medications

Allergies to medications: \_\_\_\_\_

Drug Name	What it's for	Form (pill, gel, etc.)	How often to take	When to Take	Strength

### Bethany HomeHealth Can Help

In collaboration with the primary care giver, Bethany HomeHealth nurses help patients manage their conditions in their homes by providing:

- Coordination of medicine dosages.
- Methods to eliminate or minimize frustrations with remembering daily dosages.
- Medical management of health conditions.
- Educational information for the family caregiver.
- Treatment evaluation and recommendations.

Physical therapists work with patients to regain the use of weakened muscles and improve the range of motion in joints and help with any special equipment.

Home health aides provide assistance with daily living activities:

- Hygiene assistance
- Meal preparation
- Impaired mobility assistance
- Scheduling physician appointments

Your Bethany HomeHealth Services professional can answer any questions you have about your medications and/or condition.

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